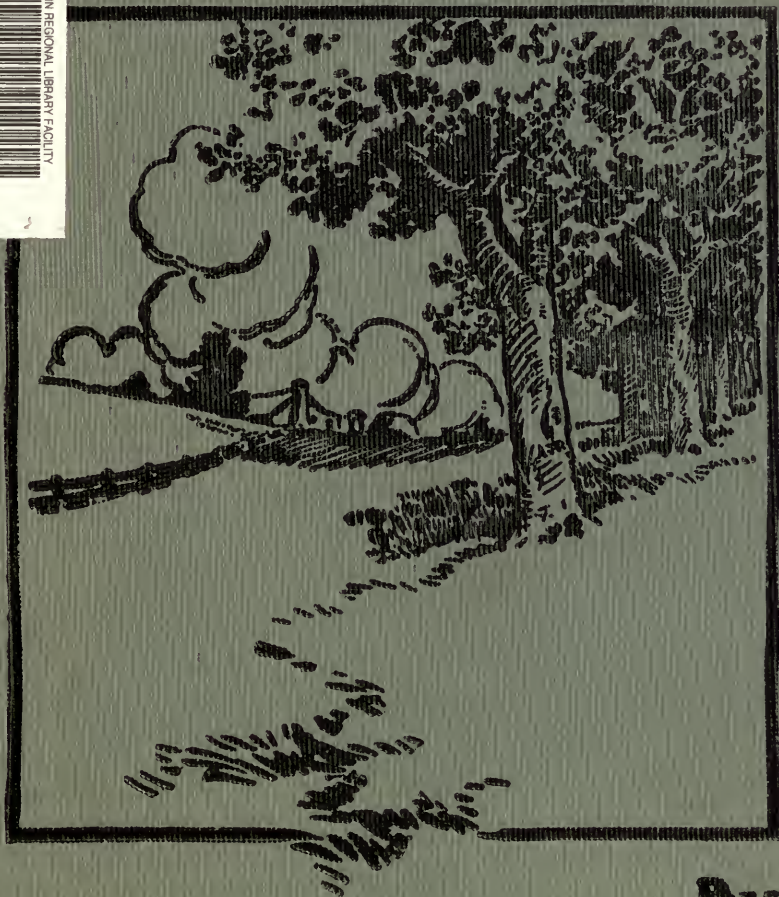


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From a drawing by Albert T. Reid.

AT THE GRASS ROOTS

COMPRISING

"The Christmas of 1883,"

AND OTHER VAGRANT SKETCHES

BY

ELMER HOUSE

(Dodd Gaston)

WITH

Cover Design and Frontispiece by

ALBERT T. REID

MONOTYPED BY CRANE & COMPANY,
TOPEKA, KANSAS.

1905

Copyright 1905,
By ELMER HOUSE.

TO ARTHUR CAPPER,

*whose kindly and encouraging indulgence
gave these sketches inspiration and birth.*

FOREWORD.

THIS trifling volume goes to its readers without pretense. If the vagrant sketches gathered between its covers possess literary merit, I do not suspect it. They have no purpose, are aimed at no condition, and, so far as I know, point no moral. They were quickened by the spur of necessity, and represent simply the daily striving for enough "copy" to fill a given space. The book itself is the bound sheaf of many a day's hard work. It was written amid the hurry and disorder of a newspaper office, with the clatter of the linotype ever in my ears, and the minute-hand of the clock moving always remorselessly on toward five in the afternoon. Sometimes the day was gray and the hand of sorrow fell upon me as I wrote. Sometimes the sun shone through the window above my head and the melody of my story ran into the major scales.

When the impulse to gather them into a bound volume first came upon me I thought to polish them up a bit. But they wouldn't polish, and they stand or fall here practically as they went to the printer at the close of the day's work. And so, while the impressions herein set forth may lack fineness and clearness, they are given as accurately as my mem-

ory kept them. The people of whom I have written I knew intimately and well. Most of them were, and are, my close friends. In only one or two instances have I taken the trouble to conceal their identity under assumed names. In nearly every incident or episode spread upon these pages I had a part.

It always seemed to me that the humble folk I knew in boyhood were as interesting as those of more pretentious circumstance with whom my lot has fallen in later years. I think they gathered from their simple diversions a keener sense of enjoyment than do those who set themselves above them. I know their expression of emotion was more natural, their lives less repressed and less hedged in by artificial limitations. And so I have placed a few of them in brief review upon the printed page. Here is the hope that they may hold for you the same degree of interest they have held for me.

ELMER HOUSE.

TOPEKA, December 1, 1905.

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THE CHRISTMAS OF 1883.

The first Christmas that stamped itself cleanly on my memory was that of 1883. It is not that I am not old enough to remember Christmas days that preceded it, but because the circumstances surrounding the Christmas of 1883 were so new and unusual that they left an impression on my boyish mind.

We had come to Kansas in a covered wagon two or three months previously, from a comfortable home in a prosperous and settled community of an eastern state. I shall never forget the house into which we moved. The advance agent of the plow and mowing-machine who homesteaded the claim had built originally a two-room dwelling. Later on he put a mortgage on the claim and added a shed room on the south. With the advent of the next year's baby he put on a second mortgage and added a shed room on the west.

A peculiarity of the shed room on the west was that it was higher than the original house, and the roof having but one slope, it presented a most grotesque appearance. In the front door of the house some jackleg carpenter, probably the homesteader himself, had cut a hole and into the hole he had nailed an old-fashioned window-sash containing three small panes of glass. I was too young to know anything about artistic effect, but that window-sash in the front door always jarred on me, and when, a year or two later, a new house was built, I chopped the door into kindling with fiendish glee.

The schoolhouse was a mile and a half away across the prairie. There were no fences worth mentioning and the road zigzagged across the prairie at the convenience of the person who happened to be using it at the time. I started to school the Monday after we got settled in our new home, and by the time Christmas came round I was established in the

community. Which is to say that I had been whipped by the teacher, had fallen in love with a girl, and had stood on the schoolhouse grounds with a chip on my shoulder for twenty minutes one day during the noon hour, daring anybody of my size to knock it off. I also had an engagement to fight Bill Fought, a neighbor boy, the first time we got far enough out of sight of the teacher and our respective fathers to insure an unlimited round go. We finally fought at the skating-pond a few weeks later, and Bill made a doormat of me. Two or three years later, having grown very rapidly meanwhile, I evened things up by whipping both Bill and his twin brother, Grant, at one sitting.

There were no churches in the immediate vicinity, and the Christmas tree was given at the schoolhouse. Preceding the distribution of presents there was a literary program by the pupils of the school and other young people of the

neighborhood. I was down to "speak a piece." It was the first time I had ever appeared on a literary program, and the thing was of tremendous moment to me.

They tried to get me to speak a "Dear Little Willie" sort of selection, but I wouldn't stand for it. I had just begun to dig into Shakespeare, Pilgrim's Progress and other literature of the heavy-weight class, and it's a wonder I didn't insist on reciting Hamlet's Soliloquy. But the thing I had set my heart on was "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and they finally let me have my way.

An enormous crowd came to the Christmas tree, and the schoolhouse was packed and jammed with people when the preliminaries began. Up to that time I had been rather buoyant over the thought that I was to recite, but when quiet settled down upon the crowd my nerve deserted me and I fell into a blue funk. I would have gone home leaving the "Light Brigade" to its fate, but I had

not the courage even to slink from the schoolhouse. And so with the heavy hand of woe upon my soul, and the palsy of fright benumbing my limbs, I sat waiting for my turn to speak.

Finally, after what seemed hours to me, although it was probably not more than ten minutes, since I was the third performer on the program, I heard my name called and managed to make my way to the platform, although I never had any subsequent recollection of the incidents attending the journey. And in a voice which sounded to me as though it were coming out of Kincade's corn-field a quarter of a mile away, I started the "Light Brigade" into action. I halted it almost immediately in the teeth of a murderous fire. For I forgot the thing and stood there gibbering at the crowd without being able to recall a single word. The horror, the chagrin and the shame of that moment are still real to me, although it happened more than

twenty years ago. At last I caught sight of the teacher and asked him to excuse me, although in the light of maturer years and better judgment I can not see what the teacher had to do with it. The teacher, however, expressed the opinion that I was excusable, and I got down from the improvised platform somehow and buried my ignominy and shame in the crowd. I am not much of a military tactician, but I know I left the "Light Brigade" in bad shape to resist the attack of an enemy, and I apologize for it.

Most Christmas trees nowadays get along with the assistance of a Santa Claus, but that one had not only a Santa Claus, but a Kriss Kringle as well. In later years I have pondered over the Kriss Kringle business a good deal, but never found out who he was or why he was mixed up with that Christmas tree. It was considered necessary that both Santa Claus and Kriss Kringle should

be humorists of a high order, to the end that they might make the crowd roar with quips and jests and jokes. So there was considerable rivalry between neighboring communities to secure high-class humorists for the occasion, and if one had the reputation of being funny he was often spoken for months ahead. Our Santa Claus that year was Sam Turner, and Jim Willison was the Kriss Kringle. They were supposed to be about the best in the business, and they had the crowd going from the start. I will admit that they tickled me nearly to death. But I knew them both very well in after years, and never heard either say anything particularly funny.

Rivalry between neighboring communities did not halt with the selection of the humorists who served the occasion. Insofar as the Doane and Dodd districts were concerned—the Dodd district adjoined the Doane on the east—it extended to the value of the presents on the tree.

The Doane folk were mostly from New York and Massachusetts, and they looked down upon the people of the Dodd neighborhood, who had moved in from Indiana and Illinois. The Dodd folk reciprocated the feeling. It was probably true that the Doane neighborhood had more education and culture than its neighbor on the east, but the Dodd district people had more money and fewer mortgages on their land.

It was generally admitted that so far as the Christmas of 1883 was concerned, the Dodd tree won the pennant. For upon its branches, in addition to the usual assortment of handkerchiefs, photograph albums, earmuffs, pocketbooks, nubias, mittens, pocket-knives, popcorn and candy, there hung also a bureau and a sewing-machine. The Doane people had to admit they were beaten, as no present on their tree cost more than \$5, but they claimed Dodd had taken an unfair advantage, inasmuch as the district

had combined with the Olive Branch neighborhood in giving the tree.

The event of the evening at Doane which did most to stimulate gossip was extraneous in its nature. Herschel Meeker, one of the neighborhood beaus, brought Ella Talbott to the schoolhouse in a top buggy. It was the first top buggy in the neighborhood, and the incident created a great deal of comment both at the tree and afterward. The attitude of the neighborhood toward the innovation is best shown by the remark of a neighbor woman who called on mother a few days afterward. She said she'd "bet anything that Joe Meeker mortgaged his claim to buy Herschel that buggy."

I did not go home with the family after the tree. I had heard there was to be a dance in the schoolhouse, and under the pretense of cutting across the prairie and getting the fires started before the family reached home, I eluded father and

sneaked back to watch the dance. I didn't get home until two o'clock. What happened to me next day is not a matter for extended reference. I had never before seen a dance, and I was greatly interested. Our family was made up of strict Methodists, who believed dancing to be a device of the devil.

A good many people stayed for the dance. Everybody danced the quadrilles, but only a few could schottische, and the waltzing was confined to one couple. When the orchestra played a waltz—the orchestra was a violin and a bull fiddle—everybody sat back and watched this highly accomplished couple. They were strangers, apparently, and I never found out who they were.

The dance was given for the benefit of the library association, and netted six dollars. Between periods of drying peaches and making soft soap the women were trying to get together enough money to buy a library. They were always giv-

ing socials in summer and plays at the schoolhouse in winter for the benefit of the library—admission ten cents. A good many years later the library association broke up, so many of the members having either died or moved away that it was no longer possible to maintain an interest in the organization. When it disbanded there was \$18 in the treasury.

“SOCIETY” AT ROWDEN’S FORD.

When I was a boy I went a good deal to dances at Rowden’s Ford. The Ford was the eastern outlet of the community which lived in the big bend of the river, and as it brought the church, the drug store, the circus and the Fourth of July celebration four miles nearer, it had a considerable patronage when the water in the river was low. The Rowden’s Forders were a rather careless lot, much given to coon-hunting by night and horse-trading by day. In the Doane neighborhood it wasn’t considered very good form to go to the Rowden’s Ford functions. There was too much fist-fighting and too much easy familiarity with the Demon Rum to make the locality popular with staid people. Very few of the Doane girls ever went to Rowden’s Ford. But most of the boys drifted into the habit in time.

The leader of society at Rowden’s Ford was the Moses family. The Moseses usually gave a dance once a week in winter. In summer the intervals between the “rags,” as they were derisively called in the Doane neighborhood, were longer. It wasn’t much trouble for the Moses family to entertain. All they had to do was to move the kitchen chairs into the “front” room and the table and cupboard out into the back yard. The decorative effect was completed by placing a chair for the fiddler on top of the cook-stove. The Moses family could arrange to give a party in fifteen minutes any time.

The dances at Rowden’s Ford usually lasted from eight o’clock in the evening until four or five o’clock the next morning. Sometimes we stayed till sunrise if no hard feelings had been engendered and the necessity of stopping the dance to keep down a fight did not arise. Those who participated were charged 25 cents apiece. When one paid his money he

received a number, and when dancing began the numbers were called out four at a time in rotation. When one's number was called he hunted up a partner and took his place on the floor. If a good many numbers were sold one did not get to dance very often, but as he could always step outdoors and stir up a fight in the intervals between dances, nobody suffered from ennui.

Nothing but square dancing was indulged in at Rowden's Ford. A girl who knew how to waltz was thought to be "stuck up" and the least familiarity with the round dance subjected a man to a good deal of suspicion. One of the features of the parties at the Ford was the jig-dancing of Lee Rowden. Lee always wore a pair of fine boots with very small high heels, into the tops of which he tucked his trousers. He was a very slender, graceful man, and when called upon invariably responded without much urging. He was also in great demand for

calling the figures of the quadrilles, and received his number free for “calling” half the dances. As Lee was a married man with a wife and several children, this arrangement was a very good one, financially, for him.

At Rowden’s Ford the three-foot vein of trouble lay very near to the surface of the ground, and one had to be very careful lest he disturb it. We boys from adjoining neighborhoods always figured to get our numbers in the same set so that we would be near each other if the lode were uncovered, and we danced with our coats off, no matter what the mercury was doing outside. I was not very popular at Rowden’s Ford. The real aristocrats of the community—the Moseses, the Rowdens and the Braziers—liked me first-rate, and are still my warm friends. But the others were always suspicious of me because I habitually wore a derby hat, and because some of my enemies had circulated the report that I could schottische.

The last party I attended at Rowden's Ford turned out unpleasantly, and I never went back. That night supper was served to the guests in the bedroom upstairs. The supper was 25 cents extra, but we Doane boys all partook of it. One of the boys who had recently moved into the community from Iowa, and who was unaccustomed to the ways of the Ford, went up to supper a little late and could find nothing to eat but a little cold rice in a teacup. He must have known that it was only an oversight, but he had the bad taste to mention it to the niece of the hostess when he returned to the dancing-floor. I was out of doors when the thing started, and got off with one cut and a few bruises, but we had to lead him home.

A PASSING GLANCE AT 'SQUIRE HARMON.

Andrew Jackson Harmon was one of the "characters" of our neighborhood. Harmon was a New-Yorker by birth and a Democrat by profession, who farmed a little as a side line. He put in most of his time talking politics, however, and if the neighbors were all busy he mounted his horse and rode until he found a man idle enough to listen to him. It was one of the neighborhood "stories" that he was once seen sixteen miles from home at the sunset of a bitter winter's day engaged in a hot discussion of the tariff with a man who was splitting wood by the roadside. The man was doing his evening "chores" and Harmon had ridden up and started an argument.

Harmon was a little sawed-off man with whiskers like General Grant's. He wore habitually a frock coat, and, being short

in stature, the tail of it flapped against his legs midway between his knees and his ankles. He had a good frock coat in which he arrayed himself for "literaries," dances, spelling-schools, county conventions, and on his trips afield. He had an old and rusty garment of the same length and contour which he wore about his work on the farm. But, summer or winter, no day or occasion which demanded a coat caught him garbed in anything other than a frock. Another sartorial idiosyncrasy which distinguished Harmon from his associates was that when he wore a white or, in the local vernacular, a "boiled" shirt, he also wore cuffs with it. In Kansas in the early eighties it was not difficult to find a sovereign who owned a white shirt, but those who owned both shirt and cuffs were indeed rare enough.

I have often thought that had Harmon been a Republican he would have gone to Congress. Certainly, I never heard a

more eloquent public speaker. He was fairly well educated, exceedingly well informed, and had a command of good English that was marvelous. He never made a speech, no matter what the subject, without referring to Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun. Occasionally he referred to Daniel Webster, but Webster having been a Whig, Harmon was a little chary about pushing him to the front.

Being a Democrat, and disliked not only by the Republicans but by many of his own party as well, Harmon never achieved much political distinction. Once his party ran him for justice of the peace, but he was beaten overwhelmingly, and his services in an official capacity were restricted to one term as clerk of the school board of the district in which he lived. As a delicate recognition of the fact that he had once run for justice of the peace, the neighbors always called him "'Squire" to his face,

although behind his back they referred to him as "Jack" or "Old Jack."

Harmon was the most arrant coward I have ever known. Being forever in a political discussion, he was likewise always in a quarrel with some one. As he was exceedingly abusive and insulting in his arguments, he was always tempting some partisan of the opposite faith to chastise him. But he always managed somehow to avoid a personal encounter. He would begin by putting up a strong bluff, and if that failed to stop his adversary and damage to his features seemed imminent, he would pose majestically and say: "I have heart disease. The doctors say I can live no more than three years at most. Strike me at your peril." That usually stopped the man he had insulted. If it didn't, Harmon slunk away like a whipped puppy. Although I saw him probably in fifty quarrels where a personal encounter seemed likely, I never knew a man to lay a finger on him.

Harmon had one boy, upon whom his hopes centered. The boy was smart and made almost as good a speech as his father. The father's dream was to make a statesman of the son, and he bought a lot of law books and set him at the task of reading law. But when the boy finally left home he went to town and opened a billiard hall. The father never seemed the same afterward: the apostasy of the boy broke his spirit and his heart.

THE UPLIFT AT DOANE.

We lived in what was known locally as the Doane neighborhood. It took its name from the schoolhouse, which had been built on the Doane farm. The family had moved away several years before, but the name stuck and still sticks, although it must be all of thirty years since the last Doane left the community.

The uplift at Doane rested pretty heavily on a Sunday-school library sent out from Massachusetts some years previous to the time of this chronicle, and the Doane Literary and Debating Society. The neighborhood was famous locally for its literary and debating society, which met in the schoolhouse every Friday night from October to April. In those days pretty nearly every country school district in Kansas had its "literary," but none round about brought out such a famous array of debaters or such literary talent as gathered at Doane.

Being a member of the "literary" was optional with those who attended. The membership fee was five cents, but nobody was barred from participation in the debate or literary program. Only members, however, could vote at the election of officers, or on matters affecting the society officially. The first office I ever held was that of treasurer of the Doane "literary," and occasionally, when the society was flush, I had as much as sixty cents in my possession. The treasurer was also the purchasing agent of the society. and during my term of office I bought all the kerosene used and the lamp chimneys necessary to replace those broken at the meetings. Afterward I worked up to the position of secretary, and was editor of the paper one term when I was fourteen. In fact, the first editorial work I ever did was on the Doane Pulverizer, a local newspaper printed on foolscap and issued every two weeks. It was considered too great a

mental strain on the editor to issue the paper every week.

At the meetings of the society the literary program was always given before the debate. Between the two there was a recess of fifteen minutes, presumably to give the audience opportunity to get over the former. The literary program was made up of music, recitations, which were called declamations then, select readings, and an occasional essay. There was only one encyclopedia in the neighborhood, and as the owner loaned the volumes grudgingly, it was pretty hard to write an essay. Usually there were more select readings on the program than anything else, because it was a great deal easier to read a piece than it was to commit one to memory. When one did go to the trouble of committing something to memory he worked it pretty hard. I used to recite "Barbara Frietchie" an average of three times every winter, working it in alternate shifts

with "Darius Green" and "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere." When one was on the program and had failed to prepare anything, the polite form of getting out of it was to arise in his seat, make a bow to the president and say "Not prepared" in a soothing tone of voice.

During the recess the secretary made out the program for the next meeting, and it was read immediately preceding the debate. When the debate came on, the older men had their innings. The questions discussed were mostly of national import, and we often settled things at Doane before Congress had a chance at them. Once a month an easy subject was selected and the boys were given a chance at it. My first debating was done on the question as to whether art is more beautiful to the eye than nature. I had the negative and lost, all three of the judges being against me. I have found in later years that the judges were right:

a good many things in nature are greatly improved by the application of a little art. The art and nature question was a standard subject for discussion. They always started beginners on it, and allowed them to work gradually up to the tariff and woman suffrage.

The judges of the debate were usually chosen from among the men in the neighborhood who were not smart enough to be debaters. John Hance was nearly always a judge, although John's knowledge of things with which the world was concerned began and ended with his ability to "top out" a wheat-stack so that it would shed the rain. Occasionally, distinguished visitors came from town to attend the "literary": that is to say, men who expected to be candidates for county office at the next election. Such visitors were always treated with rare consideration. They were invited to debate, and permitted to choose the side of the question upon which they desired to

talk. If they did not care to debate they were solicited to act as judges. The Doane idea of hospitality and consideration was to invite visitors to take part in the "literary."

The paper was always made the last number on the program. The crowd was never much interested in the debate, and as the paper, which was always extremely personal, and which dealt chiefly with the love affairs of the young people of the neighborhood, was the most interesting feature, it was kept until the last in order that the talkers might not be embarrassed by having the audience melt away at an inopportune moment. Editing the paper was hard work. It consisted principally in finding rhymes which would bring the name of every young man in the neighborhood in close juxtaposition with that of some girl.

The time covered in this chronicle was of a date written much more frequently twenty years ago than at any subsequent

time. But reading the local paper not so long ago I noticed that a literary society to meet on Friday nights during the winter had been organized at the Doane schoolhouse.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD FIDDLER.

Morey Aldrich was the neighborhood fiddler. Aldrich's orchestra, which consisted of a violin and a "bull" fiddle, played at nearly all of the big dances in the country round about. One could hire Aldrich's orchestra for \$3, and in addition to furnishing the music Aldrich "called off" the figures in the square dances without extra charge. Other fiddlers could be hired more cheaply. Music might be had for as little as \$1.50 an evening, but Aldrich was considered the best of the lot and his orchestra played for all of the swell dances.

I have referred to Aldrich as a fiddler, the title by which he was known in the neighborhood. I did not know then, but I know now, that the man was an artist, a violinist of rare skill and wonderful temperament. I had been raised in the Methodist church, and about the only

music with which I was familiar were the long-meter hymns of that sect. And yet I can still recall my surging emotion and the tugging at my heartstrings which inevitably occurred when Aldrich, on the occasion of a social evening, discarded dance music and played what he chose. The names of Schubert, Strauss and others of the masters whose music Aldrich played when he sought relaxation meant nothing to me then. I only knew they were the signal for the onslaught of a torrent of varying moods and emotions. But I know now that I was listening to a master of the bow.

Aldrich is long since dead. Even then his hair and beard were white, and he must have been a long way down the hill on the other side of fifty. He was a Massachusetts man, and I have often wondered what strange upheaval uprooted him from his native soil and set him down on a Kansas prairie. He farmed a little in a dilettante sort of

way, and had a few pupils in music—some on the organ, a few on the violin, and occasionally one in vocal methods. But there was a great deal stronger demand for bread and butter in Kansas during those years than there was for music, and the real business of his life was playing for country dances.

The fiddler's farming was the joke of the community. He had a strange antipathy for, or fear of, a horse, and would not have one on his farm. He put in and tended his crops with a hoe and gathered them in a wheelbarrow. He would not even ride behind a horse if he could help it, and invariably walked to the dances at which he played. Some of them were held as far away as ten miles from his home, and one often saw him setting out as early as three o'clock in the afternoon for the dance at which he was to play that night. After the dance he walked back home again, although at many of the festal affairs in which he

participated the merrymaking ended coincident with the rising sun.

Aldrich's one weakness, a not uncommon one, by the way, was his belief that he could sing. He knew music thoroughly and could play seven or eight different instruments, but he had not the slightest suggestion of voice considered from the standpoint of either quantity or quality. But he always sang at public entertainments, and invariably chose the "Marseillaise" as his selection. In the five or six years I knew him intimately I heard him sing the "Marseillaise" not fewer than thirty times.

His was one of the strange, unusual types in the incongruous mass which peopled Kansas in its earlier days. A gentle, kindly man with the soul of an artist and the touch of a master, his later years were as utterly lost as is the novice at sea in an open boat.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S GAYER SIDE.

Society in our neighborhood was divided into two factions—those who danced and those who didn't. The dancing faction was the larger, but the anti-dancing folk evened things up by claiming to be a great deal better than the dancing crowd. As a sort of antidote for the dancing germ, the anti-dancing crowd indulged in a form of diversion known locally as the "play party." One needed no invitation to attend a dance. All that was required of him was a deposit of 25 cents, in return for which he received a number, written usually in lead-pencil upon a fragmentary portion of a paste-board box, and tacit permission to dance whenever his turn came. But it wasn't considered polite to go to a "play party" unless one had an invitation.

The dancing parties were conducted on strict business principles. If no supper

were served the dancer was assessed 25 cents. If supper had been provided he paid 50 cents, although it was optional with him whether he took supper. Sometimes, if the dance was very swell and the supper more than usually elaborate, the prices were doubled. At that time the two-step had not been invented and they were still dancing the polka and the schottische, but mostly the dances were quadrilles, a waltz or schottische being thrown in every fourth or fifth dance.

As has been noted, attendance on "play parties" was by invitation only. If one were lucky at a "play party" it fell to his good fortune to kiss every girl present sometime during the evening. The "play party" was devoted to the playing of games and the paying of forfeits. One of the games was "Miller Boy," in which several couples marched in a circle with a lone lad as its center, singing a mournful ditty about a miller boy who took his toll with a free good-

will, and who at the same time kept one hand in the hopper and the other in the sack. At a signal the marchers changed partners, and the lad in the center made effort to forcibly separate some other lad from his girl. If he were successful the lad bereft of a marching companion paid a forfeit and took his turn as the hub around which the spokes of the wheel revolved. It was a wildly exciting form of entertainment.

There were several dozens of these games—"Old Dan Tucker," "Weevilly Wheat," "Fruit Basket," "Tin Tin," and others,—but as they were all, like "Miller Boy," founded on kissing the girls later on in the evening, they need not be reviewed at length. When forfeits had been imposed upon everybody present, they were sold by an extempore auctioneer over the head of one of the participants. This participant named the price which the owner had to pay to again secure possession of his property,

but as forfeits were always redeemed by kissing some person of the opposite sex, the price was never considered prohibitive.

Perhaps the most popular plan for redeeming forfeits was the game called "Postoffice." In "Postoffice" the person bent on retrieving his property from the hands of the trustee of forfeits went into an adjoining room and sent word to some girl, usually his sweetheart, that a letter awaited her. "Postoffice" was really the ideal form for liquidating one's osculatory obligations, because he was not compelled to wipe out the debt in full view of a jeering audience, and he could pay as much interest as the girl would stand for. Building a "Telegraph Line" and "Picking the Cherries" also had a strong following among those staggering under the burden of debt, for in each of these popular divertisements every lad kissed two girls and every girl was kissed by two young men.

This country isn't what it used to be. One cannot kiss a young woman now unless he happens to be engaged to her, and the cost of dancing has advanced 600 per cent.

IN MEMORY OF AN ORNERY PUP.

Generally speaking, I have no complaint to make. The world has been kinder to me than I deserved. Its people have often returned good for evil. My digestion has been saved to me unimpaired, and while I would have preferred to keep my hair a little longer, hair is more or less a thing of vanity and should not be entered when the ledger is balanced.

Two or three women to whom I had been fair and gentle hurt me by being cruel when it would have been just as easy to be kind. A few men whom I trusted and with whom I was frank and honest passed me the hot end of it. But in the main, I have faith in the human animal and stand for him. And still, I must admit that my warmest friends have been dogs and tobacco. No dog friend

ever went back on me. Tobacco never failed to sooth and comfort. Looking through the smoke that curled from my cigar I have dreamed my finest dreams. Never yet have I looked in vain to a dog for reassurance and sympathy. And so I dedicate one chapter of this little volume to an Ornery Pup whose brief biography runs like this.

Once there was a pup cast adrift on the tide of dogdom who came a derelict to the kitchen door of an old-fashioned woman I know. He was an Ornery Pup whose lineage was untraceable beyond the first generation of forbears. His pedigree was tainted at every crossing by mongrel blood. His coat was mangy and his bones stuck out. But when he touched at the kitchen door of the old-fashioned woman he was in still waters and a safe harbor.

Between the Ornery Pup and me there sprang up a fast friendship. For six weeks we fished in the creek, watched

for the young squirrels in the woods pasture, and lay for hours in the sun on the grass-grown declivity that sloped down toward the timothy meadow. And then, without saying even "good-by" to the Pup, I went away to try my luck elsewhere, leaving him to his amours and the humdrum life of the farm.

It was two years before I dropped anchor in that port again. I tacked into the harbor well along in the small hours of a moonlight night, as much a derelict as had been the Ornerly Pup of two years before. For I had fought my first important battle with the world and had retreated.

Heartsick and weary I swung the front gate open, and as the latch clicked the Ornerly Pup, grown now into a mature dog, came bounding to meet me, and jumping upon me with his dirty paws, licked my face in an ecstasy of joy. It mattered not to him that my coat was old and ragged and that my shirt had

gone too infrequently to the laundry. He cared nothing that I needed both a bath and a shave. His friend had come back and he was glad.

The Ornery Pup is dead these seven years now. We buried him on the little mound above the pool in the creek where he and I together caught the five-pound bass, and I sometimes think a little of my heart went into the grave with his inanimate clay. For once when the wind blew out of the northeast and the sky was gray, the Ornery Pup brought to me the first kind message I had heard in two years.

THE PRINCESS ENTERS.

I often wonder what became of Emma Barnhart, who taught the Doane school for a couple of years along in the early eighties. Miss Barnhart was the first princess I ever knew at all intimately. Up to the time she first shed her effulgent beauty and daintiness upon my young life, I had known only the girls who lived on adjoining farms. They were good, sensible girls, who could milk cows, make butter, set a hen, and in the pinch of harvest-time and haying drive the binder or run a sulky hayrake. But they were, I regret to admit, not so very beautiful or artistic. They wore ill-fitting dresses of coarse cloth, big checked aprons, heavy, broad-toed shoes—even rubber boots in muddy weather—and home-made sun-bonnets. They were always badly tanned, and in the spring and fall their hands were chapped and red like a boy's.

So when Miss Barnhart came from a neighboring town to teach our school I had my first intimation of the fact that the world was not bounded on the north by Miller's sawmill, on the east by the Porter Hill bridge, on the south by Salter's stone barn, and on the west by Rock creek. Miss Barnhart had what I have since learned to describe as an aureole of reddish hair that shone like burnished copper, a delicate, creamy complexion, soft white hands with tapering fingers, and she wore gowns that rustled as she walked, and soft, fluffy things about her neck and wrists.

In many respects Miss Barnhart was a decided innovation to the pupils at Doane. We had been accustomed to big, husky men teachers who whipped the big boys for the slightest infraction of the rules, and who began their day's work by repairing to a neighboring growth of hedge and cutting six or seven long, stout withes to be used in the exigencies of

school government. Miss Barnhart introduced new methods. She began by putting us on honor so far as our behavior was concerned, and let it be known that she did not consider it any particular crime to whisper during school hours. She taught us songs, and we devoted a portion of the study hours every day to singing. In fact, I think she was entirely responsible for the idea, which I was twelve years in shaking off, that I could sing, she having, early in the term, made me leader of one division of the school chorus.

Up to the time of Miss Barnhart's advent into the neighborhood I had never been called anything but "Dodd," "you there," "don't be all day about it," or "that little devil." She greatly surprised and pleased me by calling me "Mr. Gaston." In fact, she gave all boys over eight the title of "Mr." and invariably addressed the girls over six as "Miss Lou," "Miss Ella," or "Miss Ada," as the

case might be. Before Christmas she was the most popular person I have ever known, and she taught the year out without once being criticised by either parent or pupil, a record which will probably stand for all time.

On the closing day of school there was a big dinner at the schoolhouse, and everybody in the district came in for the dinner and the exercises. At the close Miss Barnhart tried to make a little speech, but she choked up and finally broke down and cried, and then every pupil in school sniffled and the girls blubbered as though their hearts were broken.

Ed Fought, who was the biggest boy in school and who had a certain amount of dignity to sustain, always claimed that he laughed while the others were crying, but I sat in the seat just across the aisle from Ed and saw him wiping his eyes on his shirtsleeve. Ed claimed that as Miss Barnhart was only going to her home twenty miles away to spend the summer

there was nothing to cry about, but he couldn't fool me, although I could see that his sisters believed him implicitly

Miss Barnhart came back in the fall to teach another year, and was just as popular as before. Of course it is useless for me to say that I had long before made up my mind to marry her when I grew up, and so when the story that she was to be married to a man from a distant town in the spring was first circulated, I was very miserable. At first I scouted the idea, saying that I did not believe Miss Barnhart would marry the best man that ever lived, but it leaked out during the winter that he was coming to see her, and one morning along toward the end of the term he came to school with her and stayed until noon.

I had expected a great deal of Miss Barnhart's suitor, but he was distinctly disappointing and I couldn't see what she saw in him. He was a little fat man with a fierce black moustache, who seemed

to get his exercise by twirling his watch-chain on his fingers. When he laughed he cackled, and I know now that he must have had an enormous bay window by the time he was forty. He was that sort.

At the close of the school we had another big dinner, and another surprisingly large tearfall. Miss Barnhart packed up her books and things and went away, and I never saw her afterward. I kept hoping that something would happen to break off her engagement, but nothing did happen, and she married the little fat man in the early summer. I was very unhappy for a few days, but I soon got over it, although at long intervals I still find myself thinking about Miss Barnhart and wondering what became of her.

THE LURE OF THE CIRCUS.

The biggest piece of news that ever happened in our neighborhood was when Ol Swank and Vern Harbaugh ran away with a circus. Neither was over sixteen years old at the time. They had gone down to Osage Mission to see the circus with a lot of other boys, and the spirit of unrest which surges in the breast of every boy having swept them off their feet, they were lured into the lair of the boss of the roustabouts. There was an impression current among the boys of the neighborhood that Ol and Vern were wearing spangled tights and riding a fat white horse around an improvised ring, kissing their hands the while in response to the plaudits of an assembled multitude. But that fiction was later on exploded. For it developed that Vern looked after the monkey cage and drove a wagon in the parade, while Ol was employed in the cook tent.

The affair was the talk of the neighborhood for weeks. Ol left a widowed stepmother and a large family of smaller brothers and sisters whose principal support he had been, and there was much indignation because of his summary desertion of them. He had not gotten along well with his stepmother, but she was an admirable and worthy woman, and the sympathy of the neighborhood was with her. It was freely predicted that the boys would come sneaking back within a week, but as a matter of fact, Ol never came back. Once or twice he was heard from in remote sections of the country, but he never set foot in the neighborhood again, and in the course of a few years all trace of him was lost.

The boys ran away in August. Vern made land at his father's hearthside early in the following January. Curiously enough, he seemed to have lost all of his desire to be a circus performer, but he consented to teach the boys in the neigh-

borhood the business, and nearly all of the idle time during the following year was devoted to it. Vern's circus school turned out a number of finished performers. It came to be one of the commonest of sights to see a sedate plowhorse loping across the prairie, a boy poised on one foot on his broad back. A number of polished "flip-flop" turners were also graduated. Al Grable could do a double "flip-flop" faultlessly from a short spring-board, and Frank Harbaugh reached that point of perfection at which he could negotiate a back "flip-flop" standing squarely on level ground, with the greatest of ease. In fact, I have since seen circus performers fail in turns which the boys of our neighborhood did handily without the aid of circus accessories.

Interest in the circus business was finally submerged in the excitement over the return of Henry Fought from Colorado, and the performers went out of business. Henry was the oldest of the

Fought boys, and had been in Colorado a number of years. Those of us who came into the neighborhood after his departure had heard a great deal about him. The fact that he was steadily employed at \$3 a day and was saving his money gave him considerable distinction, and as he had been a great favorite in the neighborhood, local interest in him held up well.

Henry came back one fall wearing the best clothes I had ever seen up to that time. He visited the school within a day or two after his arrival, and if any doubt had been entertained as to his status in the neighborhood it was at once set at rest. For the teacher not only greeted him cordially, but permitted him to sit with two or three of the big girls during the afternoon and help them with their examples. This latter was a special mark of distinction, and was conferred only upon honored guests of the school. I confess, that at first sight, Henry was a

little disappointing to me. For he wore chin whiskers, and I am so prejudiced against the chin whisker that even now, when the breadth and knowledge of maturer years have swept away many of my old prejudices, I am never able to associate it in my mind with greatness or distinction.

The stories of Henry's prosperity were borne out immediately upon his return by his purchase of a top buggy and a breech-loading shotgun. Up to that time there had been but one top buggy in the community and no breech-loading shotgun. The other Fought boys, Ed, Grant, and Bill, were permitted to hunt with the gun, and it not only gave them a great advantage over the other boys when the ducks and geese were flying, but caused a lot of enmity and jealousy as well. Most of us had nothing better than single-barrel guns, and there were more condemned army muskets than any other kind of shooting-iron. And so when the

Fought boys began to bag three and four mallards at a shot and talk contemptuously of muzzle-loading guns there was much indignation and hard feeling toward them.

I had nothing but an old cap-and-ball rifle, and never killed anything anyway, but I took sides with the other boys against the Foughts, who were thought to be "stuck up" over Henry's gun. We were constantly inventing stories about the prodigious amount of game we killed with our antiquated weapons and running down the breech-loader, although it was really a very good gun. Half a dozen fights resulted, and in the excitement of trying to beat the Fought boys the circus business was forgotten.

WHEN FLORA DIED.

They say youth is untroubled. The wish that lies nearest the heart of every man who fights his way is that he might go back to boyhood. The shank of every hard day brings to the tired man memories of his boyhood years. And yet I doubt that youth is happier or less the prey of sorrow than mature age. Looking backward over a stretch of years, each of which has had its share of gray days, I recall no grief so keen, so tempestuous, as that which came to me the day Flora died.

Flora was a bay mare of Kentucky lineage, which was from the spring she came a yearling until the day of her death as much a member of the family as those born into it. She had all the fine attributes of humanity without its vices. She was so kindly and gentle that little children played about her heels.

She never lost her temper, nor failed to do her best, and she had such courage and spirit that when she was sixteen years old, riding her without whip or spur and with no guide but a halter, I gave the dust of the country road to the fastest horses in the country round about.

It may be said that she did not understand my boyish confidences, and that what I mistook for sympathy and understanding were only evidences of her love for me, but I shall always believe she understood. When the old home ties were broken up and the family went pioneering to Kansas, Flora was taken along. The other horses were sold, but it would have been quite as possible to have left the baby behind as it would have been to leave Flora. And so the intimacy that began when I was a boy of five ended only with her death. I count it as one of my most precious memories that during all those years I never struck her with a whip or raised my voice to her in anger.

I shall not forget the day she died. For hours I had huddled over the fire in the kitchen stove, mute and with misery in my heart. I could not go to the barn where she lay dying, for my soul rebelled against even the sight of her suffering. And when they brought the news that she was dead I ran blindly down to the creek bank, where I lay for hours sobbing away the grief that harrowed my soul.

Life has not always been well with me since. I have stood where death wrung the tendrils of my heart and turned to it a face unwashed by tears. Sorrow has never since laid upon me a hand so heavy that it startled me into exclamation. Therefore, I doubt that youth is more care-free than age, or less trammelled by grief. I, at least, found its sorrows quite as hard to bear.

It is seventeen years since Flora died, and I remember still. For it seems to me that of all those I have known, she was the kindest, the gentlest, and the least disappointing.

THE GHOST AT SCOTT'S CHURCH.

If I have any pride in myself, it is because of the belief that I am of a practical turn of mind. I do not follow the crazy pendulum of public sentiment. I do not chase fool fads. I do not allow my opinion to be warped by every four-flusher who chances to get the attention of the public. I try always to be fair, sane and practical. I fail often and do fool things, but I try to square everything by the rule of common-sense. Theoretically, I do not believe in ghosts or apparitions from the spirit world. Applied common-sense rebels at the idea of such things and casts them out. But I once saw a ghostly visitor which I have never been able to explain away.

Scott's churchyard lay along the slope of a long clay hill. The highway ran

alongside. The church stood at the top of the hill, on the highest point in the country round about. At the bottom of the hill, a quarter of a mile from the lower side of the churchyard, lay a swamp partially redeemed to agriculture, but still the abiding-place of frogs and other scaly things.

One summer evening Press Hobbs, returning home at dusk from a day's work in a neighbor's field, started to climb the hill past the churchyard. He was a practical-minded man, then nearing fifty, stolid and unimaginative by nature. Hobbs encountered something on the hillside which caused him to take to his heels and flee as if from the wrath to come. He brought up at a neighboring farmhouse panting, exhausted, and in a condition of mind bordering on hysterics. He never gave a lucid explanation of what he saw, but the story circulated through the neighborhood and brought out other stories of queer things en-

countered along the roadside leading by the churchyard.

In the course of a week the neighborhood was in a ferment about it, and little else was talked of. Frank Halpin, Will McDannold and I were boon companions, and among the boys, the adventurous spirits of the neighborhood. Nearly all of the neighborhood crime and misdemeanor was charged to us, and the bookkeeping was, in the main, correct. Halpin was about 17. McDannold and I were a couple of years younger. We talked the Hobbs ghost over between ourselves for a week or two, and finally agreed to spend a night in and about the churchyard in the rôle of an investigating committee. We kept our intentions secret, and although the story afterwards leaked out, it was years before our experience became the common property of the people of the community.

Halpin, McDannold and I met by ap-

pointment at the cross-roads a mile north of the church one evening just after sunset. We reached the bridge across the swamp just as the dusk began to gather, and started leisurely up the hill. It was a perfect summer evening. The whirr and clatter of a harvester in a near-by wheat-field had just ceased. The frogs in the swamp were taking the first bars of the "Te Deum." We poked along up the hill without taking much heed of our mission. Every event of the evening is clearly stamped on my memory to this day, and I remember that I was telling the other boys about Lewis Wetzel, a celebrated Indian-fighter of whom I had just been reading, and we were speculating as to whether it were possible for a man to load his rifle while running at full speed. Wetzel's biographer had claimed this as one of Wetzel's accomplishments.

I was still babbling away, and we had passed the lower corner of the church-

yard. Suddenly Halpin, who was leading, stopped, and McDannold grabbed me by the arm. Straight ahead of us, in the center of the road, was the gigantic figure of a man standing motionless and at ease. I make due allowance for the tense condition of my nerves and my youthful imagination, but it has always seemed to me that the figure was at least ten feet high and proportionately broad.

Halpin had nerve that was as fine as chilled steel, and the plugging determination and obstinacy of a mule. He was afterwards a celebrated peace officer in the far West, and died with his boots on, his six-shooter barking to his last breath. After the first start of surprise he pushed forward straight toward the figure, McDannold and I following. We seemed to be approaching it, but when we reached the spot where it had appeared to be, it suddenly vanished into the air of the dusky summer evening.

We stopped instinctively, and I

glanced nervously behind me. The figure was leaning against the fence at the lower corner of the churchyard, more than fifty yards away. Halpin hesitated not a second, and again led the way toward it. When we reached the lower corner of the churchyard there was nothing there, but we could see the figure dimly outlined at the top of the hill fifty yards or more beyond where we first encountered it. It vanished again as we approached and reappeared almost immediately in the churchyard.

McDannold's nerve oozed away at this juncture, and mine followed. We climbed the fence into the field opposite and streaked across it panic-stricken, Halpin following, blowing like a porpoise. He was the last to give way, but it had been too much even for him. We ran most of the way home, and the researches of the investigating committee were never carried any further. We made a compact to keep it secret, and

it was not until years afterward that I, then a man grown, revisited the neighborhood and told the story.

I do not believe in ghosts or apparitions from the spirit world. But what was it Halpin, McDannold and I saw on that dusky summer evening, now many years to the windward, in the road alongside Scott's churchyard?

BACK AT GRIGSBY'S STATION.

I spent a Sunday lately back at Grigsby's Station. In the memory of every man who gravitates from the clean dirt to paved streets there is a Grigsby's Station, and most of them pretend to love it. I don't. Frankly, the town grinds upon my soul and maddens me. I hate its narrow, jaundiced view of life, and I resent the prying interest of its uncouth, unshaven men and its gossipy, slatternly women. I hate its meddling and its tendency to sit in judgment on the affairs of others, although I do not forget that when sorrow comes to rest on one's doorstep Grigsby's Station is always responsive, and that it gives freely in sympathy and in neighborly kindness.

Grigsby's Station wears somewhat ostentatiously the mantle of religion. Human endeavor finds its principal out-

let there in getting people to the mourner's bench. Seven months in the year they hold revival services at the churches. The fullness of the remaining five is consumed in getting the converts into the water. They talk of the moral atmosphere of the town, and boast that it never had a saloon. And yet during the past twenty years I've known a hundred strong, useful young men in the town who went to hell through drink, and I've known a hundred girls who turned to the left because the town was so busy saving souls that it had no time to provide the clean, simple diversions beloved by youth, or to point the way to a higher plane of living.

Sunday begins early in Grigsby's Station, and on the day of which I write I tumbled downstairs to a late breakfast to find the Neighbor Woman who teaches a class in the Sunday school holding converse with the Family. She had dropped in to find why the Family had

gone to a show in the "opry house" the night before instead of attending the services at which the presiding elder delivered a sermon. She noted also that the Family had been somewhat irregular in its attendance on Sunday school, and pressed it for a reason. And as she chattered on I noted curiously enough that while there was much of the church, of the minister, the prayer-meeting and kindred topics in her speech, it was all pitched to the note of querulous complaint. There was nothing of the joy of living, she touched no chord of fine endeavor, and made no record of the deeds of those whose influence was exerted outside the narrow sphere in which she lived and moved.

In these later years I do not go much about in Grigsby's Station. Those I knew intimately and well have mostly gone away and those who remain hold no interest for me. But on the occasion of which I write, my cigar-case had run

low and I harked uptown to replenish it. The center of activity uptown seemed to ebb and flow in front of the livery stable, where twenty or thirty men, most of whom needed clean linen and a shave, were grouped. In the barber shop a hot game of checkers was in progress, and there was tremendous excitement among the onlookers. A little farther up the street a man came out of the butcher-shop with a roll of meat under his arm. As I walked back the 'bus went by on its way to the noon train.

After dinner Mrs. Shank Reeves came over to sit awhile. Mrs. Reeves was much perturbed. One of the Slote boys had married one of the Peck girls—somewhat unexpectedly, it seemed—the night before, and Mrs. Reeves was in a flutter of excitement to learn whether it was a “military” wedding. I left the house again to shut out the memory of Mrs. Reeves.

Four girls none of them more than sixteen, came down the street past the hotel and peeked in. They had hoped to find a traveling gentleman, but there was no one hanging about the hotel office and they went on to Epworth League. I continued my walk. On a back lot four men were pitching horse-shoes. A little farther on, Ed Simons's dog had chased a cat up a tree and was holding it. Just beyond the school-house grounds I ran into and disturbed a fence-corner poker game.

I got back in time to join the crowd on its way to see the 4:38 train come in. At the station there was great excitement. Someone had broken a pane of glass in the waiting-room, and a young couple reputed to have recently become engaged were walking up and down the platform. I returned to the house to find Mrs. Shipley there. She had run over to borrow a little coffee for breakfast, and to express her opinion

of the Widow Carver. Pretty soon the church-bells rang. At eight o'clock a dog barked somewhere in the neighborhood, and by nine o'clock everybody was in bed. I had spent twelve hours in Grigsby's Station and had heard no generous thought expressed nor seen a single kindly deed performed.

In the memory of every man who gravitates from clean dirt to paved streets there is a Grigsby's Station, and most of them pretend to love it. I don't. Frankly, the town grinds upon my soul and maddens me.

GOING BACK TO GRAND-MOTHER'S.

I sometimes think there comes into the life of a man no more depressing influence than the realization that he is no longer a boy. The consciousness of youth is always an anchor to the windward. To be suddenly cut adrift from one's boyhood makes rough sailing. Not long ago I went for a brief visit to the old home for the first time since grandmother died. For fifteen years the smooth waters of grandmother's house were my port of refuge. It was the one place where I was always sure of a hearty welcome, rest, quiet, comfort, and the coddling so dear to a masculine heart.

The world changed a good deal during those fifteen years, and I saw it at many different angles. But neither the face nor the atmosphere of that roomy, old-fashioned two-story farmhouse set

down between two hills ever altered. It was always restful and quiet there, and the sound of a footfall could be heard anywhere in the house. One could sit on the front porch and hear the big clock ticking in the dining-room, and in the evenings the only sounds that freighted to and fro upon the air were the chirping of the katydids and the occasional bark of a lonely dog.

Up in the garret of the old farmhouse there was the most wonderful array of curious things. A chest of drawers that came over ahead of Cornwallis stood in the half-light against the north wall, and in one of the drawers was a bundle of old, yellow, faded letters written home to North Carolina by a captain under "Mad Anthony" Wayne. In another drawer were a lot of daguerreotypes of curious-looking people in impossible clothes. An old hair trunk sat under the east window, and above it hung a sword that followed General Zachary

Taylor to Mexico. In the trunk, folded carefully on top of a miscellaneous collection of other fabrics, was an old blue uniform, a hole in the right sleeve, and the sleeve splashed and stained with blood. And like a row of sentinels, there hung from the rafters a long line of hoop-skirts, derelict and abandoned by girls who had been country belles in the sixties.

I did not go often to grandmother's house. Often there was a year, sometimes two or three years, between my visits. But I always knew I could take my incipient pneumonia there any time and have it fixed up with a mustard plaster on my chest. I knew grandmother could tie a red-flannel rag around my sore throat and cure it overnight, and I knew that when I got ready to go away the holes in my hose would all be nicely darned. It never mattered how late I slept in the morning. The coffee-pot was always simmering gently on the back of

the stove and there was a pan of hot biscuits in the oven when I came downstairs. It never mattered, either, how low the canned fruit ran—it made no difference that a late frost came and killed the blossoms on the trees—a can of cherries was always set away against my coming. For while the world might forget that I was inordinately fond of cherry pie, grandmother never did.

She never understood me in the later years of her life, because we traveled different roads. Much that I did seemed foolish and frivolous to her. For I was at the age when pleasure was my watchword, and gaudy waistcoats, cravats and shirts the countersign I gave at the places into which I desired entrance. I remember she once chided me for some frippery cut to the contour of a shirt, which I was wearing, and to prove her case bought at the little country town store where she did her trading a shirt for 68 cents and presented it to me. She

claimed it was just as good as the more expensive garments I had been wearing; and that she might not be disappointed, I put it on and wore it like the soldier whose old blue uniform lay in the hair trunk upstairs. But, farther than that, she never criticised or questioned what I did, and I could be sure of her sympathy, no matter what happened.

Not long ago I went back. I knew that grandmother had gone the short journey from the home to which she went a bride in 1844 to the little cemetery on the hillside, but that was the least I had to learn. The landscape had not changed, but it no longer held an interest for me. The faces of the people were familiar, and they were kind, but they could not dispel the feeling of loneliness that gripped my heart, nor bring back that which had gone out of my life. I walked to the top of the hill overlooking the old house, saw alien figures about the place, and turned on my heel. And I

realized when I drove away next morning that I should never come—nor care to come—again. I knew, too, that the last link that bound me to boyhood had been riven, and that I was adrift on a troubled sea.

THE PASSING OF "MUSKOGEE RED."

"Muskogee Red" has passed on. In a little Territory town, one of the sentinels set by civilization at the outpost nearest to the wilderness, they found him one morning cold in death. The light had failed in the breath of a December storm, and the body lay unprotected from its fury. The coroner's jury gathered quickly, rendered a verdict of death from chronic alcoholism, and the undertaker hauled the body to a convenient potter's field. There were no flowers, no friends. The solitude and loneliness of the man's life found fitting complement in its hard, almost brutal, ending.

"Muskogee Red" was an Irishman by birth, a printer by trade. He had the burr of his country's dialect upon his tongue, its map graven upon his face. Before drink benumbed his faculties he

was a clever fellow. But that was long ago. Before it unsteadied his hand he was a good workman. But that was also long ago. For twenty years preceding his death he had but one passion, but one ambition. And that was whisky. A drink brought content, three drinks happiness, enough to fill a pint flask was Heaven. Other men who had gone "Red's" gait gathered themselves together as they began to slip over the brow of the hill toward the sunset. They married, reared families, grew a vine and fig tree, and turned their faces toward reputable ambition.

But "Red" never shifted. Every vista down which he peered had liquor at the end. He wandered about over the face of the earth scantily clothed, as scantily fed, and with nowhere to lay his head. He never knew the comforts of a home, the assurance of permanency, or felt the soft touch of a woman who loved him. Toward the end his own craft

shunned him. A few friends he kept through it all. There were those who could look far enough beyond the benumbing, degrading influence of drink to see the warm-hearted, fine-fibered Irishman it had led astray. They gave him pleasant greeting and paid, to the end, the tribute he levied.

The writer was "Red's" friend for more than fifteen years. It cost him an average of \$5 a year in tribute, but he never grudged the money. It is worth a great deal more than \$5 a year to give any fellow-being the exact thing he needs to make him happy. "Red" was always in conflict with the police. He claimed to hold the jail and calaboose championship of the country, and there was none to dispute his title. And yet, the only entry ever set against his name on the police court records was "drunk and disorderly." He never stole nor cheated, he never gambled, and he assailed neither the honor nor virtue of woman.

He knew he was going as he did. The last time the writer saw him was on a cold winter evening at the beginning of the year. He had come up to collect the final dividend on the friendship we bore each other. And, strange to say, he was sober. "I'm goin' away," said he, preliminary to his always masterly exposition of the "touch." "Likely yez 'll never see me agin. I'm gittin' old, and some marnin' they'll find me stiff and cold." He got the small silver he asked for, and drifted down the office stairs a derelict on the tide of life, too far gone in ruin and decay to hold out a hope of salvage.

"Muskogee Red's" life had no saving grace except insofar as it serves a warning. He frittered it away in utter folly. But there is this about it to make one think: if it seems that your life is cast within hard lines, compare it with "Muskogee Red's." For forty years he fought a demon appetite that brought

him nothing but misery and woe. He never had a home or reasonable assurance of a coming meal. No child ever laid its soft face against his bearded cheek. No woman ever watched for him at the window or listened for his footsteps.

And, because there is no other to do it, the writer drops a tear on his neglected grave. Here's hoping that on the Other Side there'll be no mad appetite to drag him down, no folly to benumb the best that's in him.

AN APOSTROPHE TO THE RABBIT.

If I detest any one thing more than another, that thing is politics. I hate the game as fiercely as a Methodist preacher hates the jack of spades. And yet, nearly all of my close friends are in politics, and I have been closely associated with politics and politicians all my life. Once a woman, startled into speculation by some expression of disgust that had crossed my lips, asked why I detested the game in which so many men find their keenest enjoyment. I promised her that one day I should write a specific reply. And that is the justification the reader must find for that which follows.

I hate politics because it makes rabbits of men. It turns the most courageous into spineless, abject imitations of their Creator. A politician once said to a friend of mine: "I like Gaston, and I'd

like to be friendly with him, but he keeps me at arm's-length. He won't warm up to me." I kept him at arm's-length because politics had made him a creeping, crawling thing afraid of his own shadow.

Poke Smart is my best friend. I would go farther and carry a heavier load for him than any other man I know. Poke used to be the bully boy of his town. He was a natural leader, and when he spoke they all danced to his music. Poke did his business in the open, and one knew always where to find him. Before he was elected to office he had the fine courage to stand always for the thing he believed to be right, and the finer courage to admit it when he was wrong. Since Poke was elected to office he hasn't squeaked. Every opinion he has expressed has been spoken in a whisper.

Alfred Farley is a fine, clean, decent young man against whom nothing can be said. I like him immensely because he is fine and clean and decent. Upon

a time there was a function in which Farley and I participated. Evening clothes were optional, but other participants in the function got together and decided that it was the thing to dress for the occasion. Farley was approached in the matter. "I can't do it, boys," he said. "I'm in politics, and if I were to wear my evening clothes the fellows would say my head had swelled, and it would hurt me."

I greatly admire the Hon. Benton Griggs. Griggs has such a fine mind, such breadth and poise and strength of character, that he is one of the most likeable fellows I know. He used to be so frank and open and courageous that association with him gave the keenest sort of joy. But Griggs, who has been in politics less than two years, has commenced to trim. He talks cautiously and is beginning to resort to platitude. Some things that were admirable have already gone out of his makeup. In five years,

if he sticks to politics, his spinal vertebræ will be gone and he will be like the rest.

I take it that if I were in politics, I, too, would be a rabbit. And while I have only a humble job at a modest wage, I greatly prefer it to the best politics has to offer. For I do not have to kowtow to the voters, nor cater to the tiresome asses who attach themselves to every political caravan. And I can wear what I choose, eat what I please, and say what I like.

THE SMARTEST BOY IN SCHOOL.

In my day Geddes Burgess was the smartest boy in Grigsby's Station. He knew more than any of the other boys and he told it better. More than that, Geddes Burgess was a clean, manly boy. Doing the right thing seemed instinctive with him. He acquired no bad habits, was careful of his associations, and showed both industry and thrift. We were good friends always, but the time I spent behind the livery stable learning to smoke Geddes utilized in reading history. The summers I wasted acquiring a profane vocabulary and learning to throw an in-shoot Geddes devoted to getting in touch with the dry-goods business in the emporium of Gage & Bro. In winter he was easily the best student in school and the best orator that appeared at the debates of the literary society. By the time he

was twelve years old people had begun to point to him and say there was a boy who would make his mark.

When Geddes finished high school he went away to college. From the side window of the Grigsby's Station Clarion, where I sat perched upon a high stool setting type, I watched him drive away to take the train for the university town, and although he was my friend there was bitterness and envy in my heart.

Geddes made a great record at college and was a big man in his class, but it seemed not to affect him in the least. He came home on his vacations without any of the swagger or undue cranial development which is usually the sign of the college student from a small town. There was not even the suggestion of the university in the clothes he wore, and during his summer vacations he turned his hand to any odd job of work that came along.

He graduated with honor, but he returned home the same simple, unaffected

Geddes Burgess I had known from childhood. People looked up to him, treated him with great deference, and everybody predicted that he would cut a mighty wide swath in affairs. It was talked freely that he would some day be a United States Senator or a federal judge, and many thought even the presidency not far beyond him.

Geddes decided to take up the law, and went into the office of the best firm in town. About the time he settled down to the law I took out a traveling-card and went away for a look at the country beyond. I heard occasionally of Geddes in the two years that elapsed before I returned. He was fulfilling every prediction his brilliant youth had made, and was fast developing into a fine lawyer. But when I returned home finally I learned that Geddes had quit the law and was doing newspaper work in a neighboring city. It was said of him at the time that he was the most promising reporter on the

staff of the paper for which he worked, and I did not doubt it.

I lost track of Geddes for a while, and when I next heard of him he was in the support of Kern, the great tragedian, and the critics said he was the best young actor seen in the West for years. I did not locate him again for three or four years, when I returned to Grigsby's Station one fall to find him running for State Senator. People said Geddes had struck his gait at last and that he would land high. But as a matter of fact he was beaten by a few votes and dropped out of sight again.

I met Geddes quite unexpectedly in St. Louis a year or two ago. I had not seen or heard of him for six or seven years, but he seemed the same simple, unaffected fellow I had known in my boyhood days. He refused an invitation to take a drink and declined to smoke, but we spent a pleasant hour together. Incidentally, I learned that he was working as a stenographer in a wholesale house at \$15 a week.

THE OLD DISTRICT JUDGE.

Of all the folk in Grigsby's Station I liked the Judge best. There may have been a time when the Judge was only an "Hon." or plain "Mister," but he has been on the bench so long that I can not remember it. In a place like Grigsby's Station whenever a man begins to get his head above the level of his neighbors one hears stories "on" him. It is told about that he got his property by cheating, that he is mean to his family, or that he is stingy and drives a hard bargain. Sometimes, if he is particularly prosperous or prominent, they tell "woman" stories on him, although in a small town like Grigsby's Station very little of that sort of thing goes on. But, although I have known the Judge ever since I can remember, I never heard him spoken of unkindly or disrespectfully.

I have always thought that had the Judge pulled himself out of the rut of the small country town and gone to a more considerable community he would have been recognized as a very great man. He is certainly learned in the law and he has the soul of a poet and the eye and understanding of an artist. But he stuck to the little white house with the green shutters, and for more than twenty years has sat in the dusty, dingy courtroom in a splint-bottomed chair and behind a worn desk the top of which is covered with oilcloth of the sort careful housewives lay upon their kitchen floors.

The only time the Judge ever criticised me was upon an occasion when I appeared in Grigsby's Station wearing a fancy vest very delicate in texture and very light in color. "I hate to see a man wearing a thing like that," he said when I met him in front of the postoffice. So I went home and buried the offending garment in the bottom of my suit-case. Sarto-

rially, the Judge has always been the despair of his wife and daughters. His only condescension to style is a collar and tie worn upon occasions when he happens to be holding court or attending a soldiers' reunion.

Once the Judge set out by rail from Grigsby's Station to Birmingham, a neighboring town. A new conductor happened to be on the "run" that day, and he promptly took up the Judge's pass and collected full fare. "That damn tramp back there," he remarked to the brakeman as he went forward, "was a-tryin' to ride on Judge Lee's pass." On another occasion the Judge's trousers had reached the stage where further patching was impossible. So Mrs. Judge thrust the price into his hand and bade him go uptown and buy a new pair. The Judge set off obediently enough. He came back in an hour or two with a bundle under his arm, and unwrapping it with that pleasurable pride which always

precedes the springing of a surprise, displayed two new books.

I have said that had the judge gone to any considerable community he would have been recognized as a very great man. But perhaps, after all, he chose wisely. In the little house with the green shutters every picture and every decoration is an association and every book an old familiar friend. About the house there is the green grass and the trees. Away to the west there is the river, and there are the tints in the sky-line to be watched and the drowsy hum of the country town to lull one to rest and quiet.

And so the Judge's life has run on like a gently flowing river between green banks and under blue skies. He has peace and quiet and every neighbor is his friend. The other life, the life he might have led had he chosen, has its greater victories, but it also carries its scars. Perhaps the Judge chose wisely, after all.

THE OPOLIS DAILY SUN.

Somebody once asked me to tell the most interesting episode in my experience. I think now that it was my attempt to give the town of Opolis a metropolitan daily newspaper. Opolis was a little shack town on the edge of a prairie. They claimed a population of 10,000 people and had the figures to prove the claim, but I have always thought they counted the tombstones in the burying-ground and the names on the old hotel registers in making the compilation.

I lit in the town one day along toward the crimpy end of an unpleasant autumn, without money and without a job. Although the town had already three daily and two weekly newspapers, I found that another daily was badly needed. There was much dissatisfaction with the press of the community. The fellows who were running newspapers in Opolis were, it

seemed, slow and non-progressive. I gleaned from sundry conversations with real-estate agents, lawyers and probable candidates for office at the next election, that what the town really needed was a bright, clever young fellow who could throw vim and snap into his work.

As my entire capital at that time consisted of vim and snap, I concluded I had found a lucrative field for its investment, and having neither money nor job I concluded to start the fourth daily newspaper in the town. Before I took the final step I went around to see the slow, non-progressive fellows who were running the sheets already established. I intimated to each of them in turn that if he would give me a job at \$10 a week I would drop my hastily formed plan to drive him out of business, but the "stall" wouldn't fight and I went ahead with my plans for a bright, snappy, metropolitan newspaper.

I knew a man in a near-by city who

had a printing plant lying idle, so I borrowed the necessary railroad fare and went down and leased it. On the same trip I touched a friend for \$25 to pay freight on the plant and for incidental expenses. When I finally got my material set up in a room for the rent of which I had stood the landlord off, I had \$4 left. A dollar of this I used as advance payment on a stove for which I had gigged a second-hand dealer, another dollar was expended on coal, and a third went into the cash drawer of a retail dealer in lamps, kerosene and sponges. The remainder of the nest-egg was deposited with the barber and haberdasher in an effort to bring my personal appearance up to the standard required of newspaper proprietors.

On the morning of the day of the first issue of the Opolis Daily Sun I had hope in my heart and ten cents in my pocket. The white paper for the first two or three issues of the Sun was borrowed from one

of the competing sheets upon the representation that the carload I had ordered had not yet arrived. I may as well say here that the particular carload of paper in question hasn't reached me yet.

I had gathered together a rattling good staff. One indication of the weakness of humanity is that every man who gets to know me well wants to work for me. It was an all-'round staff, too. Every man on the paper could write editorial or news, set type, run a press, or solicit advertising. There were seven of us all told, and I shall always believe it the best aggregation of newspaper talent ever gathered under one canvas in a town the size of Opolis.

In order to avoid embarrassment on Saturday nights, I made the Sun a coöperative concern. I was to have the last word in matters of policy, but the profits of the enterprise were to be shared equally. Whenever I get to thinking I

know nothing about business I recall the masterly manner in which I evaded payday on the Opolis Daily Sun and am reassured.

We started out with a shriek and a hurrah. The first issue of the paper was made on a Monday, and the city editor was thrashed by an indignant citizen within thirty minutes after the Tuesday issue was on the street. I had trouble with the owner of the theater on Thursday, and only escaped a fight by putting up a strong bluff. The advertising manager was ordered out of the biggest store in town Saturday because of a "hot" story, incriminating the proprietor, unloosed by the police reporter in an effort to be funny.

The Sun sold like twenty-dollar bills at reduced prices on the streets. Sometimes we disposed of as many as 100 copies a day, but somehow not a great deal of money came in at the gate. On the first Saturday night there was \$1.30

in the cash drawer after the incidental expenses had been paid, and after I had divided it *pro rata* we all went out and took a shave and a sack of smoking-tobacco.

The Sun Publishing Company ran along for a month with little annoyance from creditors. Occasionally, on Saturday nights, the dividend was forty or fifty cents apiece and the company enjoyed the luxury of a cigar. One week the business manager insisted on getting a shave, a haircut and a shampoo, and it cut the profits down to ten cents apiece. On another occasion the foreman, who had, as was his wont, fallen in love, insisted on spending the entire week's earnings for carnations, and no dividend could be declared. This caused some hard feeling on the part of his fellow-stockholders, and was really the beginning of the end.

At the end of the first month the advertising collections were insufficient to

pay more than a small installment on our combined hotel bills, and the landlords began to give us the stony stare. The Boniface at the Astor House had the bad taste to remonstrate with the manager of circulation. "Hell!" said the manager of circulation, who was a somewhat profane man, "you've got no kick coming. You're only feeding two of us. The autocrat over at the St. James is keeping the coyotes from the door of the editor, the business manager, and the foreman. You're really not doing your share."

By the middle of the second month the cordiality of the people had not only congealed, but it had reached a thickness of fully sixteen inches. The ice with which the town encased itself against our approach broke all records for that latitude. Everything we ordered began to come C. O. D., and our position at the hotels became absolutely untenable. So I rented a suite of two rooms furnished

with a couple of beds, three chairs, a kerosene lamp and a combination stove. The foreman's mother sent him \$5 for a birthday present and we bought a coffee-pot, a frying-pan and a miscellaneous assortment of tinware, and began doing our own cooking.

I made arrangements for a week's credit at a butcher-shop and a grocery store and we got along fairly well, the advertising man doing the cooking and the balance of us taking turns at washing the dishes, until the butcher and grocer called our bluff the following Monday. By that time everybody was "next." Creditors began to multiply and harass us. I went to and from the office through alleys and by the way of unfrequented streets in order to avoid meeting people we owed. We lived literally from hand to mouth. Frequently we had money sufficient to buy baker's bread, butter, and coffee. Occasionally, we had meat. Sometimes we were down to baker's bread and mighty little of that.

The greatest office expense was white paper, and we bought and borrowed until the limit was reached. One of our competitors had gotten out a rather elaborate Christmas edition. He ran a weekly publication and used what is known in newspaper offices as a patent inside. For his Christmas edition he had ordered a larger supply of patent insides than his circulation warranted, and the superfluous Christmas stories and "Peace and Good Will" poetry was piled in the rear end of his office, one side blank. The business manager, who had a good head, deftly lifted the rear window of the competing office one night and stole the pile of patent insides. It gave us a bad name in the town when the story came out, but it deferred the obituary notice of the Daily Sun several days.

We made luncheon one day on water poured over the remains of the coffee with which we had girded up our loins at breakfast. "You'll have to do some-

thing," I said to the business manager that afternoon when the dinner hour began to stare us in the face. "If this Dr. Tanner business keeps up another day we'll have to suspend." The foreman had been growling all afternoon and threatening to jump to "Chi," and there was every indication of a general storm.

The business manager's name was Grim. Poor fellow! He crossed the dark river by the laudanum route a year or two later because the girl he loved could not care. Grim went out dejectedly. He came back just at dusk, an hour or two later, and laid a quarter on my desk. "I had to do it! I had to do it!" he kept saying to himself as he walked away. "Had to do what?" I asked. "I robbed a little boy who was going after meat," replied Grim with a sob in his voice.

The end came suddenly the following forenoon. Along about eleven o'clock the close-fisted miser from whom we

rented our apartments sent word that we could neither occupy them nor remove our personal effects until we paid the rent. The bill was \$6: it might just as well have been \$6,000. "The jig is up," I said to the Sun Publishing Company when I read the miser's note. "I'll go out and sell the Sun, or give it away."

Around the corner I met the idle eldest offspring of the Episcopal rector. He had been pestering me for a job as a reporter, and tackled me again for the fifth time in three days. "I'll sell you my interest in the plant, the good-will and the business for \$10," said I. "If I can borrow the money from mother, I'll take it," he replied after a moment of becoming hesitation. The offspring came back in a half-hour with a \$10 bill and the deal was closed. The members of the Sun Publishing Company put on their coats and went out to a quick-lunch counter. The next morning the four remaining members who had been able to

successfully conceal themselves from the brakeman during the long night, disentangled themselves from a car attached to a fast freight in the Burlington yards, Chicago, and the company dissolved.

BROTHER BILL.

I am not very accommodating or obliging, and as a result I am somewhat unpopular. A good many people say I am not only grouchy, but that I am also mean and selfish. If I have those characteristics they may be attributed to my brother, Bill. Bill is one of those whole-souled, good-hearted fellows who is everybody's friend. When Bill was a boy and went to Sunday school he never brought fewer than four boys home to dinner with him. Frequently he brought eight. The result was that by the time Bill's guests had satisfied their hunger there never was any fried chicken or cherry pie left for the members of the family.

Bill's habits did not change when he grew up, and the house was always full of company of his inviting. The guests occupied the house and the family camped around in the woodshed and the

barn. When any of his friends needed money he went out and borrowed it for them. He was always paying interest on two or three notes at the bank given for money to help some friend out of a hole. When one was going anywhere with Bill the start had to be made the night before, for Bill always had to stop and shake hands with so many people that he invariably missed the train.

Bill is a crackerjack in his line and makes a good deal of money, but his next month's salary is always carrying a ninety-day mortgage. He married into a large family in order that he might have opportunity to entertain a lot of relatives all the time. One night last winter he met a lodge brother who flagged him with the signal of distress. The weather was cold, and Bill took him to the shelter of his own vine and fig tree. The weather continued inclement, and upon his host's pressing invitation the lodge brother remained two or three

days. One morning Bill arose to feed the furnace and discovered that his guest had gone without the formality of saying "good-by." Coincident with his leave-taking Bill's overcoat and \$40 which he had been carrying to pay the rent disappeared. The same day Bill had a notice from the bank calling his attention to the fact that a casual acquaintance whose paper he had indorsed for \$300 had defaulted payment.

Bill's house is full of useless books, rugs, antique clocks and other débris bought because he is so polite and accommodating that he hates to turn down the agents who call on him. Bill's picture is in every biographical record and "Prominent Men of the West" volume ever issued west of Denver. It isn't egotism on his part, for he is really a very modest fellow, but he is so kind and "house-broke" that he hasn't the heart to turn a canvasser down.

Old Bill will read this sketch and

laugh. Then he will start down the street, turning aside every few moments to shake hands with somebody or to make a little loan to some friend. When he returns accompanied by a guest for dinner he will urge his wife to write a letter to some of her girl friends or some relative extending an invitation to make them a visit.

Bill is popular. If he ran for office he could probably get every vote in his town. But he will never have a dollar so long as there is a chance to give it away and his nose will always be on the grindstone. I am not popular, but I have seen so many instances of Bill's assininity that I don't mind it.

HER FIRST REAL TRAGEDY.

The first of life's real tragedies has come to Patty Stewart. For Patty has lost forever the dearest illusion childhood holds.

At school one day just before last Christmastide a group of playmates, older in years and wiser in material things, took Santa Claus from Patty and left her nothing.

Taking Santa Claus from a child is theft complicated with extreme cruelty. For the moment one might as well take from the Christian his God.

Around the Santa Claus myth are builded the most beautiful things in the life of a child. The real sweetness and light of this existence lie principally in its illusions.

Reality is often harsh, and has, always, acute angles and inharmonious grouping. Illusion is as soft as the south-wind and

as delicately tinted as the breath of spring.

They say childhood is untroubled, but the days that are to come will bring to Patty Stewart no tragedy so keen as that precipitated by the blundering tongue which tore her faith in Santa Claus from its moorings.

THE PRINCE BUSINESS.

Nearly every unattached girl in this town is looking for a Prince. Which is all right. Nothing inferior to a Prince in the matter of title is good enough for any girl.

Where the unattached girl falls into error is not in the matter of taste, but in matter of geography. She believes the only place she can meet a Prince is at the seaside, in the mountains, or at the home of a girl friend in some other town. There is always too great a disposition to overlook the members of the royal family right here at home. The Princes are distributed pretty equally, and one finds them quite as plentiful in Leavenworth, Des Moines or Peoria as they are at the seaside or in the mountains.

The idea that Princes are restricted to certain localities, or that the home-grown sort is inferior to the imported variety,

is error. No matter where she finds him, the girl will discover, in time, that her Prince smells of tobacco and is profane when occasion warrants. She will find that he knows the different brands of intoxicants well enough to call them by their first names, and that he changes his hosiery reluctantly. And she will also find that in the privacy of his apartments he prefers an old pair of slippers and his shirtsleeves to the royal robes.

If he doesn't, the chances are that he isn't a Prince.

There is just as much idiocy, just as many split infinitives, and just as much that is reprehensible among the men who frequent the drawing-rooms along Fifth avenue as there is among those for whom the shades in the front parlors in Topeka are drawn on Sunday evenings.

No town or community has a copyright on royal blood.

MY FRIEND THE BOY.

I.

My friend the boy, who has been away, is in love. He talks a great deal about the Girl—calls her a Queen, and wonders what she can see in him. The gang was “on,” and when he showed up in the local room they began to josh him about the Girl, but he said he couldn’t talk about her before a crowd. And the gang, appreciating his delicacy, dropped it. After dinner the boy and I drilled over to the State House grounds and lopped down under the trees. And then he told me all about it.

She’s a Baltimore girl, a junior in college, and her folks live in one of the old-fashioned houses that stand back from the street. Once, when the torrent of humanity leaped and swirled around a corner, they met face to face, and then the torrent separated and left them standing

alone—just he and she in all the wide, wide world alone. The boy told me this not in these words, for all this clatter is mere figure of speech, but he told me that although he felt quite unworthy of her he hoped some day to have her with him for all time.

He told me more—much more. How his love had brought soft, exquisite colors into his life, and shaped his determination and strengthened his manliness. But this is not especially interesting—the mere story, I mean. I tell it only because humanity likes to touch the hand of a man who has found his great joy. For when the torrent swirled and separated and left them standing face to face, the sweetest, finest, most comforting thing the boy will ever know came into his life.

And if it lasts—if the girl proves true, and the boy doesn't forget---it isn't worth while to worry about the boy any more. The game may go against him, the wheel

stop on the red when he plays the black, but nothing will matter much. For he has now all that is really worth striving and fretting for. And if it goes away there will come in its place a pain as bitter as his joy was keen. And he will stand alone groping for something he cannot find, crying for something that will not come, his mental faculties so numbed by the pain that everything else will seem shriveled and trivial. We may not all find and keep this treasure. There are blanks in this lottery of joy. If mine is a blank I'd like to stand close to the boy—this boy or some other boy—who has drawn a capital prize.

II.

My friend the boy is going back to Baltimore to-day. Back to the old-fashioned house that stands away from the street and to the Girl who is watching at the window. To the boy it will be farther to Washington and Baltimore by

fast train than it used to be from Omaha to Sutter's Mill by ox team. The Lake Shore Limited will crawl along like the last spring wagon in a funeral procession, and the B. & O. Royal will make a land terrapin look like a streak of chain lightning. Between Chicago and New York the hours will seem a day long; between New York and Baltimore every minute will be an eternity.

The boy hasn't seen Her since June. All summer and fall he worked away in a stuffy little office in a Kansas tank town, where the wind blew the naked dirt in great clouds up and down the main street and the smoke of smelters clogged the atmosphere. Under the tin roof above his head it was always hot and dry or hot and sticky. Most of the people of the tank town were not his kind and their diversions did not appeal to him. But the boy didn't mind. For he was looking forward to Her. All through the long days of the summer and early

fall Love sat smiling across his desk. It caressed his forehead with cooling touch as he sank to slumber, and it bade him a cheery "good-morning" from his dresser mirror when he tied his cravat next day.

This is what Bill, the police reporter, calls "using the tremolo stop." Bill doesn't care much for the tremolo stop, but I do. It is the sweetening of this life—the one essential flavoring of the things that are. And because I have no Great Joy of my own I am going to get up beside the boy when he goes out this winter to ride the air or bridle the clouds. For

"Of the world's great things but four there are,—
Women and horses, love and war."

III.

My friend the boy is back from Baltimore, and he brings the best sort of news about the girl who lives in the old-fashioned house that stands back from the street. It seems that she has promised to marry the boy, and for him there are

roses blooming in the garden, the lilacs are out in the front yard and the pansies are peeping through the beds bordering the path to the gate.

Down in a little town in Kansas the boy and I slept together the other night, and he told me the Whole Story. He might have been talking yet, but the traveling gentleman in No. 5 adjoining kicked on the noise along about 4 o'clock in the morning, and we had to quit. The traveling man told the porter confidentially that he hadn't had a wink of sleep all night and it looked as though he wasn't going to get any.

This is the first girl the boy ever loved, and of course he made a mess of it. There was, it seems, another "lobster" hanging round, and the boy was on the anxious seat. He was so anxious that he botched his work during the day and couldn't sleep at night. Finally, he went over, determined to settle matters. He couldn't get his courage up, and went

home humiliated and dissatisfied. He tried it again, with the same result. On the third essay he blundered through it, and found that his goal line had never been in danger.

And now the boy is planning harder than ever for the future, and he thinks he can save about \$500 this summer, anyway. I hope the boy's dreams may all come true. But I am eight years older than he, and I know some things he has not learned. I know he may wake some morning to find grief sitting in a chair by his bedside and trouble peering over the footboard. Meanwhile here's hoping—hoping that fate will step so lightly in his presence that he'll never wake up.

THE GIRL IN "GOOGLY-GOO."

The Girl sifted wearily into the restaurant and sat down across the table from the Man who was eating a midnight lunch. The feather in her hat was broken and awry, her hair was in disorder, and her jacket was pitifully cheap and coarse. There was a haggard, dejected look on her face—a face that might have played havoc with men's hearts under different circumstances. The Man recognized her: she had stood fourth from the left lower entrance in the chorus of the "Googly-Goo" company at the theater that night.

Meanwhile, other members of the chorus had sifted as wearily in, and had sat down to the various tables about the room. They were typical of their kind, which is to say that they were poorly dressed and unattractive off the stage. Some were talking loudly, but most of

them were quiet and unobtrusive. The Man knew the kind and gave them little heed, but there was something in the face of the Girl opposite that attracted and held his sympathy.

She was a little thing: she could not have been more than nineteen or twenty, and for all her cheap, tawdry clothes and the slovenly hair there was about her the indefinable touch which only good breeding can give. It may be that the Girl recognized the sympathy in the Man's face. It may be that the reserve which dammed the flood-gates of her soul had finally given away before the torrent of her woe. At any rate, she looked across the table and asked the man if he lived in Topeka. It was not the place or occasion for a question of that sort, but it did not suggest to the Man the thing it might have suggested, and he answered her kindly.

"What I want to know," continued the Girl, "is, could an honest girl get a

job in this town and earn her living? I want to cut this out. I can't stand it much longer. I ran away from my home in Michigan last spring and joined a company that played the town. I had hung around the theater and met two or three of the men, and I was crazy about the stage. I had always been crazy about it, for that matter. I could sing pretty well and dance a little, and I had been in a good many amateur entertainments. The home papers always praised me a good deal, and it spoiled me for anything else.

"Well, I joined the company at a town twenty miles away, and to this day my people don't know what became of me. The company kept going up to July in a hand-to-mouth sort of way, and I managed to live, but it was awful. During the summer I got an occasional engagement at one of the summer theaters, but there were a lot of times I went hungry. In the fall I caught on with 'Googly-

Goo,' and it seems to me we've played a thousand one-night stands since.

"I get \$15 a week. My board never costs less than \$7; sometimes it costs \$10. Laundry bills and incidentals eat up most of the balance. I can't even dress myself comfortably on what is left. I spend my time between a cold, cheerless room at a cheap hotel, the day coach on the train, and the dirty dressing-rooms of some third- or fourth-class theater. Between times I am cursed and abused, and every man I meet seems to regard me as lawful prey. I've stayed honest and decent, but I can't go back home. It's a little town, where everybody knows everybody's business, and the gossip about me would drive me mad. I simply can't face that, and I can't keep this up. I'd rather die than go on."

That's all there is to the story, but there should be a lesson here for the girl who is stagestruck. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the "Googly-Goo"

company was “shy” one chorus girl when it went on to Denver, and that up in a little Michigan town there was one home where Thanksgiving Day had a real meaning.

A PILGRIMAGE INTO THE PAST.

One year I spent my two weeks off differently. Mostly, when my loafing-spell came round I had gone main-traveled roads. Sometimes I went to dawdle in the sand at the shore. Again, I cut deep into the north-woods, with no thought other than of my appetite and my fishing-tackle. Sometimes I followed the August incursion to the cities, or paid the price at lakeside or mountain resort.

But on that vacation—the vacation I spent differently—I went to follow for a little while the long since effaced footsteps of a Soldier Boy who crossed the river at Shiloh, stood in the thinned ranks at Stone River, double-quickened across the field of Missionary Ridge, and was a unit in the straggling blue line that planted the flag on Lookout.

We who are under forty are callous to the Boy in Blue. It is a far cry back to

Lookout and Shiloh and Stone River. To the generation born in the forty years since the pride in it all is dimming, the glory of it all is fading. I had grown indifferent with the rest, and so I went down to Lookout and Shiloh and Missionary Ridge in memory of the Soldier Boy who carried a musket through it all.

The birds twittered in the thickets, the drowsy lull of the farm was about me, and the soft wind of a September afternoon fanned my cheek as I sat on a fallen tree by the wayside and in fancy watched the field of Shiloh grow red with blood again. Standing on a stone on the brow of Lookout I followed the fortunes of the charge across Missionary Ridge, and heard again the rattle of musketry and the clank and clash of bayonets in the fierce conflict the blue and the gray had waged two thousand feet beneath my seat. And later in the day I walked up and down the long, serried lines of headstones on the little eminence in the valley, and

looked out upon a landscape, peaceful and quiet now and blackened by the smoky finger of commerce, where fifty thousand men, some in gray and some in blue, had laid down their lives at their country's call.

And then I knew why these things were the Soldier Boy's pride and glory, and why their light to him never dimmed or faded. I understood, too, his last expressed wish that he might go to his rest under the white stone in the little country churchyard with the flag of his country wrapped about him. I hope he knows of my tardy trip across the present and into the past. I hope he knows, too, that I came back with a deeper understanding and a keener appreciation of the faded coat of blue and the empty sleeve swinging in the wind.

THE TAKING DOWN OF HESTON.

This is a little story describing the manner in which Heston received what was coming to him. It is not a thrilling story, and it has no unusual angles; but because it happens to be true, and because it points a fine, two-edged moral, it is given here.

One night while Heston was sojourning in a big town east of the Mississippi river, Fate picked up the deck and dealt him a Queen of Hearts. There wasn't any game going on at the time and the deal was a little irregular, but Heston and the Queen made up their minds to start one just to play the cards that had been dealt. The lady picture-card in Heston's hand was what the boys call a good looker. She had big brown eyes, the willowy effect in form, and the silken petticoat rustle in her garments. Without subjecting this tale to unnecessary elonga-

tion it may be stated that the game opened that night was never closed for three years. Sometimes it was operated under the electric lights, sometimes in the shadows of the front porch, and once a year it was briefly interrupted to be immediately resumed by the shifty sands and in the shade of the woody dells of the Northern resorts.

The Queen came fully up to her advance photographs. She was wonderfully clever, sympathetic, coy enough to satisfy and good fellow enough to please. It was plain from the first hand that she liked Heston immensely, and Heston reciprocated by falling sincerely in love with her. Ahead of them the water was as smooth as glass, and there was a spanking breeze behind. She was of age, her folks liked Heston anyway, and her girl friends were undisguised in their admiration. They got along perfectly, never quarreled, and were as considerate of each other as chance acquaintances at an afternoon

reception. When Heston asked her to marry him she didn't ask for time or spar for wind. She just fell over into his arms. And so their courtship drifted along in idyllic fashion for three years. The Queen was steadfastly true, and Heston, considering his opportunities for being otherwise, was reasonably square and honest with her.

But about this time the thing began to cloy a little on Heston. He liked a fighting game, and this one had been so easy that it failed to satisfy his savage instinct. The Queen had never given him any reason to be jealous. Everything he was even suspected of wanting had been handed him on a platter. Nobody had objected to him; nobody had knocked. A pottering scientist couldn't have found an obstacle in Heston's way with the aid of a microscope. He knew that when it came to comparisons he was dirt under the Queen's feet. But things had shaped themselves so that all the zest of the chase

had been eliminated, and he liked best that for which he had to fight.

Untoward events helped widen the chasm Heston was digging between himself and Her Gracious Majesty. He had attended to his employer's business so industriously and with such intelligent zeal that he found himself out of a job, and came West to look for a new one. With the new job he found new faces, and in a month or two there was a new photograph on his dresser. The Queen wrote frequent bright, gay and gossipy letters, which Heston occasionally read and infrequently replied to briefly. After a while the Queen, who was smart, even if she wasn't many-sided in her knowledge of men, saw how things were going. And so one day Heston took a package out of the postoffice containing his ring and a dignified, but pathetic little note breaking the engagement.

There were no reproaches, no accusations. The note was even jocular in a

way. But beneath its surface there was visible a woman's sorrow. The note bothered Heston a little, not that he cared much about the Queen. He was too busy with some Princesses and a few Houris and Seraphs. But he knew he'd been a dog, and rather regretted it. He wrote the Queen a nice letter, which he didn't at all feel, and the incident practically closed. Once in a while for months after, he exchanged letters with her, but there was no recurrence of the old symptoms, and after a while even the occasional letters ceased.

That was two or three years ago. Meanwhile things had not gone so well with Heston. He had his troubles. The game broke badly for him, and the Princesses, Houris and Seraphs were not there with the comfort and sympathy. So it is not to be wondered that his heart turned instinctively to the Queen. He remembered her wonderful cleverness, her never-failing powers of entertainment,

and above all, her kindly sympathy. And in time his desire to see her overcame his scruples as to what her own attitude in the matter might be. He had heard nothing from her for a couple of years, and wasn't even sure she lived at the old place. But without telling her anything about it, he took a layoff and made the trip East to see her.

The maid who went upstairs said the Queen would be down in a minute. Presently she came rustling into the reception room, her face aglow and a smile of welcome in her eyes. They talked a while in the old, informal, gossipy way and the Queen planned a little dinner for the following evening. Her frank cordiality and apparent pleasure at the meeting disarmed Heston of any suspicion that his hand might be worthless. So he invited her to go to the theater that evening. She accepted, and as Heston wasn't sure he could get tickets for the performance he made an appointment to

come back in an hour or two and let her know. When he got back to the house the reception room had clouded up and was beginning to rain. There was another man, and the man was cross and discourteous. The Queen tried to keep the conversation going, but things grew so chilly that Heston left after telling her he had secured the tickets.

That night on the way to the theater she was even gayer and more cordial and friendly than she had been in the afternoon.

“And why,” said Heston, “are you so extraordinarily nice to me tonight? What have I done to deserve these selections from the conservatory?”

“Well,” said the Queen, and there was the light of triumph in her eye, “I’m being nice to you because I do not expect to see you again.” She let it soak in for a couple of blocks, and then she added: “I am going to marry Mr. Farrell this winter.”

WHEN A MAN IS WORTHLESS.

Generally speaking, when a man is worthless it is charged up to whisky, poker, cigarettes, or blondined women. It is my observation that the front-parlor habit spoils more young men than all four other vices mentioned. A young man with girl on the brain is more thoroughly worthless than the young man who drinks. The girl habit takes more time than poker and costs more money. Left to itself, the blondined woman vice is its own cure. But once the front-parlor habit gets its hooks into a man he never shakes it off until he marries or is barred by age. The "girl business" causes him to neglect his work, sends his mind "wool-gathering" and paralyzes his usefulness.

I am not condemning the girl. Everything in this world worth a man's best endeavor has a woman in it. Her in-

fluence for good cannot be overestimated. The trouble is that not one young man in ten can do the front-parlor circuit in moderation. I do not amount to anything, principally, I think, because I have always had "girlitis." For fifteen years my mind has been on the front parlor instead of on my work. I have drunk whisky—in moderation, and have a passing acquaintance with poker. I have had a working knowledge of all the other vices. But none of them ever took a job away from me or prevented promotion and a raise in salary at the end of the year.

I never pottered over my work during the day or watched the clock for the last hour before quitting-time because of the booze I expected to drink that night or the poker game I expected to sit into. But I have given many a piece of important work a lick and a promise—I've watched the minute-hand crawl over many an hour made weary by the thought

that a slim young thing in a fluffy gown was waiting in the front parlor for me. I never expect to get over the habit. Truth to tell, I don't want to. The rustle of a woman's skirts is the finest music I know. But reform in this country always begins at the wrong end. The reformers should give whisky a rest and tackle "girlitis." That's the vice we're really suffering from.

ON LICKING NICK HARTLEY.

I think the greatest disappointment of my life was the fact that I was never able to lick Nick Hartley. I had plenty of opportunities, but Nick was so much bigger and stronger than I that I was always afraid to take the chance. Nick was a fat, husky lad with a bulldog jaw, who lived in the Meeker neighborhood. He was three or four years my senior, and I don't suppose there ever was a time in his life when he could not have taken me down and tied me hand and foot. He used to keep me in a state of perpetual terror. I don't remember that he ever abused me specifically, but he knew I was afraid of him and he nagged me and bullied me whenever he had a chance.

It got so that whenever Nick and I were coincident at a "literary," spelling school, or other neighborhood entertainment, I promptly hid out. He had me

completely "buffaloed." I used to put in hours nursing my plan of revenge. I figured that I would, in course of time, catch up with him in the matter of physical development, and when that time came I proposed to get him into a big crowd and punch his head off. I had the whole thing systematized, even to the phraseology in which I expected to call him to an accounting. And when I had worked out the preliminary plans I would sit and gloat over the discomfiture which would possess the hated Hartley when I should lick the pea-green stuffing out of him and walk majestically from the field leaving him to the pity of his friends and the jeers of mine.

But I never caught up with Nick. He always held the "edge" on me in the matter of muscle, and I knew intuitively that I should get well thumped if I tried for revenge. Finally our ways separated and I lost track of him, but my failure to put the "fixin's" on him has always

been a source of keen disappointment to me. I have an idea that Nick developed into a fair, useful and industrious citizen, and that he is now a respected member of his community. But if he is around anywhere handy I wish he'd come up some day and let me take two or three pokes at his jaw. I couldn't hurt him much, and it would be a great accommodation to me.

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